

Amendments to the Specification

Please amend the paragraph at page 6, lines 16-28 in the following manner:

If the test at step ~~200~~ 202 determines that the ordered item is not in inventory in the U.S., order information is delivered to an overseas supplier 208 that can be similar to or the same as system 102 of Fig. 1, and the following steps are carried out at overseas facilities. Order ~~fulfilment~~ fulfillment takes place at step 210 that can perform functions similar to or the same as warehouse 100 of Fig. 1. The ordered items are packaged into individual packages for respective individual customers at step 212, with an individual destination (address) label to the individual customer and preferably with an indication of parameters such as the weight of the individual package for the customer. At step 214 a number of individual packages for respective customers are consolidated into, and are packaged into, a single shipment. For example, orders received in a single period such as a business day, are consolidated into a single package. The consolidated package is shipped from Japan at step 216 as a single export shipment, at a single shipping charge to the supplier from a shipper such as UPS.

Please amend the paragraph at page 7, lines 1-16 in the following manner:

The following steps take place in this country. At step 218, the consolidated shipment is received in the U.S. and is processed as an import entry through customs and otherwise. At step 220, the consolidated package is divided into the original individual packages, which are shipped to the respective customers for

individual package delivery, preferably by the same shipper. At step 222, a calculation is made of the domestic freight (shipping) charges applicable to the respective individual packages. This calculation uses a domestic freight conversion table from a database 224. As a non-limiting example, the table contains information identifying the shipping charge that a shipper such as UPS would charge for delivery of an individual package to the customer from a virtual domestic (U.S.) location, preferably based on factors such as the package weight and/or size and a geographical zone in which the customer is located. The calculations at step 222 provide charging information from which an automatic domestic freight billing system prepares shipping bills for the respective packages and customers at step 226. These bills are sent or otherwise delivered to the respective customers at step 228, e.g., together with the packages shipped at step 220 or in some other way, electronically or as hard copies.

Please amend the paragraph at page 7, line 25 through page 8, line 14 in the following manner:

Referring to Fig. 4, the process in a preferred embodiment includes providing a database of international freight amounts and one or more domestic freight conversion tables. The process starts at step 400 and at step 402 stores in the appropriate database applicable international freight amounts. For example, assuming in a simplified example that there is only one consolidated shipment from a first country (Japan) facility to customers in a second country (U.S.), the entry in the database can be the actual dollar amount that the shipper (e.g., UPS) has charged the supplier for this

consolidated shipment. The amount can take into account any arrangements between the supplier and shipper that would affect it, such as long term contract provisions, volume discounts, penalty charges, etc. The information stored at step 402 can be kept accessible in various ways, such as by day, week, month, etc., by shipping order number, by shipper, etc. It can include additional information such as information regarding the individual packages in the consolidated shipment, such as the identity of the items included, the identity of the customers, addresses of customers, etc. At step 404, the database is supplemented with one or more domestic freight conversion tables, for example tables such as illustrated in Fig. 3. Additional tables can be stored and used for different purposes, such as for shipping to customers that have different arrangements with the supplier, for shipping via a different carrier, for slower but less expensive shipping, etc. The process may end at step 408.

Please amend the paragraph at page 8, lines 15-24 in the following manner:

Referring to Fig. 5, a flowchart of main steps in a process implementing a preferred embodiment starts at step 500 and at step 502 checks if an order has been received from a customer and cycles through this check until the process finds that a customer order has been received. Then, at step 504 the process stores the customer order information in the appropriate database, and at step 506 checks the appropriate database to see if the ordered item or items are in inventory at a U.S. facility. If the answer at step 506 is yes, an individual order fulfillment from the U.S. warehouse is

carried out at step 508, in the manner earlier discussed in connection with Fig. 2, and the process returns at step 510 to step 500. These steps typically are carried out in the one country, the U.S. in this example.

Please amend the paragraph at page 10, lines 9-22 in the following manner:

In order to keep track of differences between the shipping charges to the supplier and to the customer, and make use of the calculated differences, at step 534 the process calculates such differences by using information between the international freight amount read ~~obtained~~ at step 522 and the domestic freight amounts calculated at step 530 for the packages in the respective consolidated shipment. Because of the manner in which these two types of freight charges are levied, typically there will be differences, positive or negative. For example, the supplier can bill \$15 to each of 100 customers for shipping charges, but the shipping entity may bill the supplier a total of \$14,500 (or a total of \$16,000) for shipping the consolidated package of those 100 orders from the overseas facility, processing it through customs and then delivering the individual orders to the customers. In this example, the difference step 534 calculates will be a gain of \$500 (or a loss of \$1,000) for the supplier. At step 536, the process stores the calculated difference in the appropriate database, and ~~earrier~~ carries out required accumulation and processing of information, and at step 538 returns to step 500.

Please amend the section heading at page 12, above line 1, in the

following manner:

~~CLAIMS.~~ What is claimed is: